

Nicole Garcia interviewed by Edwin Garcia

October 31, 2019

Bronx, NY

Edwin Garcia: My name is Edwin Garcia and I'm interviewing Nicole Garcia, I'm in Bronx, NY on October 20, 2019. Do you give me permission for this oral history?

Nicole Garcia: Yes, I do.

EG: Today, I'll be talking to you about your relationship with food and how it has changed over time. Alright?

NG: Okay.

EG: First question, where did you grow up?

NG: I grew up in the Bronx, New York... on the east side.

EG: So, I want you to describe your favorite meals growing up.

NG: It must be Mexican food, always.

EG: What is it about Mexican food that you like?

NG: I just like tacos, tortillas and how they are made. It tastes so good, I love avocados, I love cheese and chicken. So they're all combined and it's my favorite, I just love it. it's great!

EG: I can say the same for myself. Why is this significant to you?

NG: What do you mean?

EG: Tacos and all the other foods that you mentioned. Why is it significant?

NG: It is significant for because it's also healthy it's not like it's an unhealthy food because it has avocado, has natural fat, cheese has dairy and chicken has protein and it's healthy food I like to eat healthy.

EG: I'll go onto the next question. Is there a certain food that reminds you of a loved one?

NG: Brownies. It's something that I make for my family and it reminds me of loved ones and I just enjoy doing it.

EG: Can you tell me a memory that you have making brownies?

NG: Yes, for my brothers 16th birthday. I made brownies with M&M's because it was too late when we came up with the idea since we couldn't get cake, so I ended up making brownies for him. So we waited for him at 12 midnight with his brownie and he was very happy.

EG: Do you currently have a favorite meal? That you like to eat or make? And if so, what is it?

NG: Avocado toast, It's my all-time favorite. I make the avocado with eggs, and mozzarella cheese. I can't get over that food, I'm always craving it. It's my favorite.

EG: If there was ever a time that you can eat a certain food and the meal you mentioned, any celebrity or famous person ever, who would you eat avocado toast with?

NG: I would tell Anuel to eat [Avocado Toast] with me, he's a Puerto Rican artist and because that is my favorite artist. I would like to eat with him because I would like to have conversations with him.

EG: Is there any food in particular that you wouldn't eat?

NG: I don't like broccoli, that's the only thing that I don't like. That's it, I eat everything else. I don't have limitations with food.

EG: Are you a religious person?

NG: Yes.

EG: Is there any food that you don't eat because of your religion?

NG: I choose not to eat pork but it's not like my religion tells me to not eat it, I choose not to because it makes me feel bad [Towards animals].

EG: Is there any food you will eat at a certain location or holiday that's important to you?

NG: Well for my birthday, I always get pasta. My birthday is a holiday [July 4]. I will always get chicken pasta which is my favorite. For Christmas, I will eat traditional food which is rice, pernil, salads and lasagna.

EG: Who in your life cooks the best?

NG: My aunt. My mom as well but my aunt is my favorite cook.

EG: Why do you think she cooks the best?

NG: Well because she is a chef. She cooks professionally, she doesn't make traditional food all the time.

EG: What kinds of food does she make you?

NG: She makes a dish called dumplings, it comes from Haiti and it's the best meal I've ever eaten before.

EG: Obviously eating well could mean eating vegetables and green foods, but what does eating well mean to you?

NG: Since I'm Dominican, I am used to eating rice and beans every day. I think that's healthy to eat and eating eggs in the morning and bread. In the night time, plantains and stuff like that because I usually don't carry a diet.

EG: Do you have a favorite restaurant?

NG: Yes, my favorite restaurant is in New Jersey, It's called son Cubano it's by the river, you get a New York City view. It's good, it's a Cuban restaurant.

EG: So what do you usually order there?

NG: I usually order ropa vieja, which is beef with beans and rice.

EG: How does the food you eat or cook make you who you are?

NG: Well, what they say "Is what you eat is who you are. So I feel like if I eat healthy, I'm going to be a healthy person and if I eat junk food, I'm going to be an unhealthy person. I feel like based on what I eat I can say I'm a healthy person because I take care of my calories and the sugar that I'm eating, and I don't really eat in the streets. So I consider myself a healthy person and a healthy diet.

EG: Is there any food that reminds you of home?

NG: Of course, rice and beans, chicken and there is also one more thing and it is fritura, which is a bunch of chicken, beef, and meat it is fried with fried plantain. There is also pastelitos.

EG: If you could go to any country and try the food over there, where would you go? And why.

NG: I would go to Asia because I've never really had Asian food, unless you know you could go to any corner stores and get Chinese food but I want to actually try Asian food and their culture, it seems interesting. Or Indian food [Laughs].

EG: Is there any meal or snack that you always try but never get tired of?

NG: Yea, avocado. I never get tired of it. It's not a snack but I put it in all my meals.

EG: What's the most important meal to you throughout the day?

NG: My breakfast because I start out my day with my breakfast. It gives me energy to keep on going because school is hard, and I need to have energy to be in school.

EG: Do you have any foods that have impacted you throughout your life in a good or bad way?

NG: That's a good question. I think that a food that has impacted me throughout my life has been pasta because it's a long story, but I can't stop eating carbs, so I'm in a weight loss journey and because me loving carbs I can lose weight. So I feel it's impacting my life in ways I didn't know because I can't stop eating carbs.

EG: There is obviously some restaurants like Chinese restaurants that have Latino and black workers. How do you feel about a white person working in a Dominican restaurant, how does that make you feel?

NG: That makes me feel so proud, I wouldn't feel bad, I would feel like "wow" people are learning about our culture. It would be a great experience because I feel like white people tend to stay in their lane and don't usually open up to other cultures besides theirs, even though they consume our food and they hire us to work for them but they

don't really open up to us or learn about us. So that makes me feel great, not only white people but other cultures working with Dominicans because they will learn about our culture.

EG: Is there any meals that you always wanted to try but never gotten the chance to?

NG: No. I eat everything I want.

EG: Like you said you wanted to go to Asia and try Asian food.

NG: I want to try sushi. I've eaten sushi at Dominican restaurants so it's a Dominican way of sushi. So I want to eat actual Japanese made sushi.

EG: Is there any food that you recommend me to eat? If so, why would you think I'll enjoy it?

NG: Avocado toast.

EG: Why do you think I would like that?

NG: Because it's great it tastes amazing. It's the best food ever.

EG: What are your go to side meals? For example, you would put eggs on the side of pancakes, what is yours?

NG: For anything, it will always be avocado [Laughs], French fries and fried plantains.

EG: Is there anything I should have asked that I didn't ask?

NG: I feel like you've asked everything.

EG: Well I'm glad, thank you.

NG: Thank you.